

Representative Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. released the following statement about today's groundbreaking for the proposed massive O'Hare Modernization Project in Chicago.

"This is Chicago's 'Big Dig' into long-term debt, yet ironically it will do little to solve the region's serious aviation problems. This puts the interests of contractors before those of passengers and the public," Jackson said.

"O'Hare needs reasonable and affordable improvements. But this proposal, if allowed to proceed without responsible safeguards, will saddle a generation of Chicago taxpayers and travelers with billions of dollars of debt and an airport that's as overcrowded and delay-prone as today's."

Jackson also noted the project runs counter to aviation economic trends. "O'Hare fares are already substantially higher than the national average. Now Chicago wants to build a high-cost airport when the airline industry is rapidly retooling toward low-cost. This not only threatens Chicago's standing as the world's aviation hub, it's bad news for taxpayers, travelers and our future.

"Moreover, the FAA is blatantly ignoring concerns raised by the US Department of Transportation's Inspector General earlier this year. That study questioned the city's cost

projections and the city's ability to identify funding sources. More importantly, it concluded that even after \$20 billion is spent, O'Hare would face overcrowding and delays similar to today's within five years," he noted.

"Rather than fast-tracking a costly O'Hare project, the city should be rallying behind building the Abraham Lincoln National Airport in the South Suburbs. The facts are clear and compelling. We can add more capacity to Chicago's constrained market at a fraction of the cost by building the third airport -- and it would be financed by private investors, not taxpayers," said Jackson, the leading advocate for building a third airport.

"Three months ago I urged the Chicago City Council to exercise their oversight responsibilities and hold hearings regarding the true costs and impacts of the O'Hare Modernization Project. But nothing was done," he said.